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ABSTRACT

MONIQUE is a very simple, pseudopersonalized computer-assisted program for French. It is written in BASIC for use in the Hewlett-Packard 2000 C' or the HP 2000 Access system computers. The program, in its simplicity, allows for a great degree of variety in the types of drills which can be included--grammar and culture. MONIQUE is not designed for computer-assisted instruction or testing but for supplementary drillwork, affording the student unlimited access to drills. With minimal editing MONIQUE can be converted into computerized drills in any language. The cost factors involved in using MONIQUE are relatively small. The time factor for the teacher is equally small--it involves no more time than that needed for creating a 20-25 item daily classroom quiz. Benefits gained from using the program are primarily motivational since it provides the student with readily available drills based on material currently being studied in class and with ungraded mini-tests for practice. (Author)

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MONIQUE--THE ASSISTANTE

MONIQUE is a tirelessly good worker. She rarely makes mistakes. She is very consistent, and she will do anything you tell her to. Yet, she is basically quite dumb! After all, MONIQUE is a series of computer-assisted French drills which I first began to use in 1974. Since 1974 the basic program has been refined but the original concept and purpose have been retained.

A very common reaction to hearing about a computer for use as an instructional device in FL study is "Oh, no! Here's another attempt at replacing the teacher with a machine! We insist on proliferating machines and undermining--even dehumanizing our institutions"; or "Well, someone has found another toy."

Au contraire. The original flurry of NDEA-financed language laboratories has subsided, and teachers were not replaced. The utopian laboratories and original audio-lingual materials have been replaced by rationally and realistically designed methods which incorporate these same laboratories or at least the principle of these labs, and which use them to much greater benefit. Teachers do not consider tape and cassette recorders, overhead, filmstrip and movie projectors, and videotape equipment as attempts on their lives and livelihood, but as welcome additions to the basic hardware to be

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used in everyday classroom situations and activities.

So should it be with the computer, since it combines the indefatigability of tape, the self-correcting features of programmed texts and the novelty of video-tape equipment. After all, it is a lot more interesting for a student to use than any one of the other machines we have at our disposal.[1]

Nevertheless, the computer can never replace the language laboratory since it deals with a totally different skill area--oral language versus written language. Nor can it replace the teacher, since personal contact with the teacher cannot be replaced by a cold, impersonal, unsympathetic machine. Even pseudopersonal responses made by a computer lack the personal warmth in a good student-teacher relationship.[2]

Dr. Cecil Wood, at the University of Minnesota, has incorporated CAI [computer-assisted instruction] in his first-year German course. In the preface to his handbook, he makes a statement which reduces the intimidating, all-knowing, never-erring computer to a simple, dumb machine.

> If you take the CAI German course, you will expect a miracle. I do myself. Neither of us will get it. Hope always exceeds reality.
>
> The computer should teach you grammar, the television oral comprehension and vocabulary; the classroom should blend them into language. Actually this is what will happen--not as perfectly as either of us hopes, but pretty well. (....) When hope exceeds reality, then you are a human

being (slang for homo sapiens); if it did not, you would be a computer (slang for an idiot).

Computers, normally, do not make mistakes. Neither do they eat pizza, make love, change their minds or dream. They cannot speak, either--not German, not any other language.

You can.[3]

In a Carnagie Commission report on Higher Education published in 1975, it was remarked that the real truth about computers in higher education lies more in the pessimism of educators against using the computer than in the optimism of technologists toward its use, i.e., any one kind of technology is quite appropriate for certain disciplines and certain types of subject matter, and quite inappropriate for others. In other words, does--or can--the computer find a niche in FL study?

Even with the plight of FL study at the college and university levels, with decreased enrollments and reduced faculties as a general trend, do we have sufficient time for each student who comes to see us with his humerous requests for help, and complaints such as "I don't understand this stuff. Can you help me? What else can I do?"--and the "stuff" he does not understand is a grammar point you have been discussing for two solid weeks in class, replete with quizzes and several vain attempts at rephrasing a single grammar point ad nauseum.

Therefore, in an attempt to help the students and to afford them more drillwork, I desinged MONIQUE. The name is not an acronym for an esoterically-named program, but simply the first French name that came to mind.

MONIQUE is a very simple computer program in design. In its simplicity, it, of course, has its limitations, such as

(1) It does not allow for variables in answers (synonyms, alternate forms).

(2) It has an invariable format.

(3) It does not direct students, based on their errors, to relevant portions of the grammar text.

(4) It does not branch students to simpler problems based on the same grammatical concept.

Many of the currently available CAI programs are both complex and expensive. They call for more elaborate computer equipment such as plasma display units, audio- and visual components. Also, these programs were developed and designed for use in the teaching situation in the specific environment in which they were developed. In other words, these "canned " programs are not readily adaptable to other learning situations and environments.

For schools having a more restricted budget and more limited computer resources, MONIQUE can be used, since, for its operation, the basic hardware needed is obviously a computer (such as the Hewlett-Packard 2000C'), and a teletype terminal--either direct-wired or with an acoustic coupler.

Most teletype terminals do not allow for upper- and lower-case letters or accent marks. I find this a minimal drawback for the consideration of adopting such a device. At the other extreme is CARLOS [Computer-Assisted Review Lessons on Spanish Syntax], which artificializes Spanish orthography by using an apostrophe in the next space after a letter to indicate the accent mark, or an asterisk after N to represent a tilde;

CAN*O'N. Although initially the lack of upper- and lower-case letters and accent marks may seem inaccurate or misleading, the basic practice in using the correct forms--past participles, adjective agreement, position of conjunctive object pronouns, etc.--minimizes this relatively small drawback.

Many of the limitations I have mentioned are superseded by the fact that MONIQUE is not computer-assisted instruction but computer-assisted drillwork. The drills are for review or are supplementary work covering only one basic point of grammar that can easily be located in the textbook, and the drills are never inserted before a point is to be or has been studied in class.

MONIQUE, even with its limitations, is a highly flexible instrument, since its flexibility stems directly from its very simplicity. The program is a totally optional activity for those students who want and need supplementary work. Granted, it does not give the student the personal contact with the teacher and the benefit of one-to-one tutorial sessions, but it does give them (1) a conveniently accessible series of practice drills relevant to the subject matter being studied in class; (2) an available review of problem areas in FL learning; and (3) immediate reinforcement, verification and correction of both correct and incorrect answers.

With minimal work and very minor changes, MONIQUE can be made into MARIA, HELGA, SOPHIA, FULVIA or NATASHA--that is, a Spanish, German, Italian, Latin or Russian program.

COST AND TIME FACTORS

Of primary concern to potential computer users, surpassed only by the qualm of using "yet another machine" in FL classrooms, are factors of cost-benefit, cost-effectiveness and time.

With the widespread proliferation of computers and computer technology, the cost of hardware is rapidly declining. Even communication costs--the use of phones and/or phone lines--are falling into acceptable ranges. The major cost component is associated with the software (the instructional materials). The more widespread they become, the lower the costs to even a potentially insignificant number of cents per student hour.

One of the basic costs, aside from both the hardware and software, is terminal user time and storage. Based on financial records for my own program in 1975-76, and for my own classes, if all 74 of my students had used the computer, the cost per student would have been about $7.50 for 10 months!

DATE	TEACHER USE		STUDENT USE		
	COST	HOURS	COST	HOURS	COST PER HOUR
1975-76	$289.80	27.89	$338.87*	293.91	$1.12
1976-77	$210.94	---***	$106.11**	92.95	$1.14

*Includes first- and second-year students.

**Includes only second-year students.

***Information not available.

Most of the teacher-use time is devoted to inserting new drills, making changes in the frame program and correcting errors in the inserted drill items. Actually, much of this work

could be done by a student assistant. The only purely teacher-controlled activity is the writing of the drills (based on current classroom materials), which takes no more time than that to create a 20-25 items daily classroom quiz.

FORMAT OF PROGRAM

In an attempt to "pseudopersonalize" the program, the student is asked his name and is addressed by this name for the duration of the program.

The program is presently being used for second-year students as a portion of an innovative course in intermediate French. The entire program, except for rejoinders, is written in French. Students are addressed by TU and carry out some relatively simple dialogue with MONIQUE before they begin the actual drill.

1. LOG-ON: identification of the user for link-up with the computer.
2. IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM: The program is identified in French as MONIQUE. It then states that it is here to help the student.
3. NAME: The student is then asked his name.
4. DIALOGUE: The dialogue is constantly changed to suit the season of the year or situations on campus. Students answer either by yes or no, and statements are made concerning their answer.
5. ARE YOU READY TO WORK? If the student says yes, then the drill program continues. If he answers no, the program terminates.

6. LISTING OF EXERCISES: The computer then lists the drills available by title.

7. CHOICE: The student chooses the drill by title.

8. DRILLS:

   a. 20-25 items

   b. All drills have an identical format--a one-line computer printout of the question or stimulus form immediately followed by the student's one-line input response.

   c. Correct response: If (and when) the student responds correctly, the computer chooses a reward statement from among seven randomized statements which are written in colloquial English. These statements are frequently changed to avoid boredom.

   d. Incorrect response:

      (1) First incorrect: The student is informed of the incorrectness of his answer, but is given a second chance. This is not counted as an error. He is informed of his wrong answer by one of five randomized reprimand statements. If his second attempt is correct, see 8c.

      (2) Second incorrect: The student is more forcefully informed of the wrongness of his second answer. This is now counted as an error and the correct answer is given. Here again, there is a randomization of five reprimand statements.

      (3) Rewrite of correct answer: The student, upon being given the correct answer, must retype the correct answer given, thereby reinforcing correctness. This loop may be continued in-

terminably until the correct answer is typed in.

e. Time factor: The student is given 90 seconds for the input of some response. If no response is given, this zero input is counted as an error, the correct answer is given, and it must be retyped correctly before the program proceeds to the next item.

9. END OF DRILL: The student is informed that the particular exercise he is working on is over. He is informed of the number of errors made [double errors; the computer has given the correct response]. He is then asked if he would like to do another drill. If he answers yes, the program is repeated beginning with the listing of the drill titles. If he answers no, the program proceeds to termination.

10. TERMINATION: The student is told to come back soon, and is reminded to type in 'BYE' [a command for LOG-OFF, i.e., separation from the computer link-up]. Finally, the amount of time spent at the terminal is given.

TYPES OF DRILLS

The types of drills used in MONIQUE range from rewrites to fill-in-the-blanks, translation, true/false, or responses to questions.

To date, more than 50 different drills on widely ranging subject matters have been used by students. Subject have included:

Verb tenses
Verb conjugations (regular and irregular verbs)
Subjunctive mood
Conditional sentences
Negation
Interrogation
Passive voice

Conjunctive object pronouns	Relative pronouns
Possessive adjectives	Prepositions
Determiners	Translation
Adjective forms and positions	Culture

CONCLUSION

Since there is virtually unlimited access to the terminals on campus and no provision for prohibiting multiple attempts on any one drill, it is neither feasible nor practical to use the computer program as a testing device--that is, tests for evaluation of performance with grading or as a measure of learning. Nevertheless, each attempt by a student is, in essence, a mini-test of sorts with none of the risks of classroom evaluative tests. No grades are given; there is no peer pressure or competition; there is no real time limit for work at the terminal since any drill may be repeated numerous times; and there is instant verification of the correctness of the student's response. The work is not required but is optional, so the student may use the computer when he wants to, as long as he wants to, if he wants to. The ready availability of supplementary drillwork helps both the student and the teacher, since it is there, and is not time-consuming: a typical 20-25 item drill takes only 10-15 minutes.

One positive feature of using the computer is the very novelty of having a machine carry out a drill session and dialogue in French on an individual basis with none of the potentials of intimidation or embarrassment of answering a question wrongly in front of a class of peers. Furthermore, I have used colloquial English rejoinders in the responses to right or wrong answers. This pseudopersonalizing has been criticized--not by students,

however, who find that such randomized reward or reprimand statements are amusing and therefore make the work less tedious and frustrating. Criticism may also be levelled at more complex computer programs like CARLOS which simply responds with SI or NO; or certain tape programs which indiscriminately comment TRES BIEN, even if the student has responded wrongly or with an accent approaching that of Atilla the Hun speaking French, or even if the student did not even open his mouth!

It has been very impractical to carry out a study on the effectiveness of this computer-assisted tutorial work as would be seen in improved performance on tests. The main area of effectiveness appears to be in the improvement in student attitude and motivation. Extra work and practice are available. It can be done when needed and at the student's convenience. It is done in private and at a leisurely pace. The work can only help the student by reviewing him and by affording him extra practice. And, best of all, it is fun to do. If the student senses a benefit from this type of work, even if it is in the form of having performed an enjoyable learning activity, I feel as if I have been successful to some degree. Only too often have students left our classrooms after two or so years of language study with an intense dislike for the language, and the sense of having done very little that was relevant to them or that was interesting.

The computer is not a panacea, but it is a positive learning experience, and positive experiences lead to learning.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Harry Reinert, "Extending the teacher: from text to context", THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNICATION, ed. Gilvert A. Jarvis, Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1974, p. 286.

2. John R. Allen, "ELSE at Dartmouth: an Experiment in Computer-Aided Instruction in French," THE FRENCH REVIEW, XLIV, 5, April, 1971, p. 911.

3. Ferdinand A. Ruplin, "CAI--The State of the Art," DIE UNTERRICHTSPRAXIS, 1973, No. 2, p. 78.